

## **RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 141 TRANSCRIPT**

**Arlie Russell Hochschild, Bill Curry and Russell Mohkiber**

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, David Feldman. How are you doing today, David?

**David Feldman:** Excellent. Good morning.

**Steve Skrovan:** And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello!

**Steve Skrovan:** Did I wake you up, Ralph?

**Ralph Nader:** No. I'm just overwhelmed by this book. We could go for an hour and a half, and we really got to get underway. I think people are going to be fascinated by this show because this is field work at it's most depth in Southern Louisiana.

**Steve Skrovan:** We'll get to that. I'm going to tell people what the rest of the show is about.

**David Feldman:** I think Ralph read the book while lining up outside Best Buy on Black Friday for his TV.

**Ralph Nader:** David, you're always striving to be a comic.

**Steve Skrovan:** Always striving. Yeah. Well, we have another - as Ralph said - we have a fascinating and intellectually stimulating show for you today. We're going to talk once again, later in the show with Bill Curry about how the Democratic Party can move forward in the wake of their humiliating defeat at the hands of Donald Trump, not only for the White House but also Republican control of Congress. And despite all that has happened in the country over the past few weeks, we

know that corporate crime never sleeps. And we have just the man to keep us up to date on that, Russell Mohkiber, the Travis McGee of the corporate crime beat. But first, we're going to shift our attention back to the election and more specifically to the base of voters who put Donald Trump over the top, at least in the Electoral College. What was their motivation? Why did this billionaire real estate mogul and reality and TV star appeal to them? How do they see the world? And to do that is our first guest. David?

**David Feldman:** Arlie Russell Hochschild is professor emeritus of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Hochschild is the author of nine books, including most recently, Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right. It was named one of the six books to understand Donald Trump's win, according to the New York Times, the day after the election. Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right is based on intensive interviews she conducted over the last five years with Tea Party enthusiasts in Louisiana. Strangers In Their Own Land is a finalist for the National Book Award. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Professor Arlie Russell Hochschild.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Thank you very much.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed, Professor Hochschild. I want to read this paragraph from your publisher describing the book to lay the predicate. And this is a quote: "This powerful and provocative book, more than five years in the making, takes readers deep into the hearts and minds of Tea Party and often now Donald Trump supporters in Southwest Louisiana, one of the 'rednecks' regions in the country. 'Embedding' in Lake Charles, Louisiana, Hochschild attended fish fries, gumbo cook-offs, Pentecostal Church services, and Trump rallies and has long conversations over card games and cookies with people whose political beliefs differed greatly from her own. Ultimately, she accumulated 4,600 pages of transcripts based on interviews of more than 60 people." Let me ask you a bit about methodology here. I've been all over the country. I've been in red states, some blue states, and I was very struck by the fact that when I lay on the table, how they're being cheated by corporations as consumers; how they're being endangered and underpaid and underinsured by corporations; how they're children are being exposed to toxics in the air, water, soil, they don't come out the way your people interviewed in your book come out.

I get applause in the South, in the reddest areas, when I lay these facts on the table. I get nods. And also, the Southern juries give the largest verdicts in the most oppressed areas. When trial lawyers sue big corporations in Beaumont, Texas or Alabama, the juries in the South give the largest verdicts and are likely to give punitive damage verdicts, compared to the Midwest, Northeast or California. How do you answer the question: are these sixty people representative of the people in their community?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** I think they are. But it's interesting what you say, because I think what it points to is that when you get down to it, there, is common ground to be found between less than right, but it's lost. I guess that's what I discovered. It's lost, because the people I came to know understood that they lived in one of the most polluted places on Earth. They knew that Louisiana has a second highest death from cancer rate for men. They knew this. It didn't take a liberal coming in there to tell them about that. This has happened to their family, young people dying of cancer and a lot of the pipe fitters working in the petrochemical plants. It is the center of the petrochemical industry. They had long stories to tell about dangerous work. So all of that, they knew. But when you so what we really need is a progressive agenda to put breaks on corporate greed and regulate the polluters, eyes glaze over. And here's what I really did. I live in Berkeley, California, teach Sociology and I wanted to get as far right as Berkeley, California is left. I just wanted to take my own political and moral alarm system off, give myself a chance to be genuinely fully curious about what it is to live in a different truth and really experience the world in a very different way. And, so I went to the South. That's where the right is grown, and to Louisiana as the Super South. Fewer whites voted for Barack Obama in 2012 - only 14% - than did in the South as a whole region. So, I was there in the Super South. And I went in with this red state paradox that a lot of people wonder about. How could it be that the poorest state with the worst health, the worst education that rely more on federal aid than they give the federal government in taxes and hate the federal government? That's the paradox many of us have carried for years. And Louisiana was a super exaggerated version of that, because actually in 2014, it was the poorest state. It beat Mississippi out. Forty-four percent of the state budget comes from the federal government, and yet they're super Tea Party and very enthusiastic Trump support. I thought, "Perfect. This is exactly what I don't understand." What I came to find is that they were very aware of this red state paradox that people like me scratch their heads around. But they were aware of it. They

were ashamed of it. But something else seemed more important to them. And I came to think of it as a *deep story*. What's a *deep story*? *Deep story* is a story where you take the facts out. You take the moral judgments out. It's just a story as felt. It's what *feels* true to people. And after getting to know people, I went to them with this: is this really how it feels? And then I went back to them, and they said, "Yes." What is it? It's that you're waiting in line as in a pilgrimage towards the top of the hill where stands the American dream. The line hasn't moved in a very long time. You're feet are tired. You feel a sense of great deserving for this prize. You're obeying the rules. You work hard. But you're not getting there. Then as you experience it, you see some line-cutters. Well, who is that? People just cutting in line. That would be blacks who now have access to jobs that used to be reserved for whites, even worse would be women, who now have access to jobs formerly reserved for men, immigrants, refugees, even - from their point of view - the oil sought endangered brown pelican. Louisiana state bird because it's almost extinct had to be resuscitated. And people would say, "Oh now, the liberals are putting animals ahead of us people." In this deep story, they see Barack Obama waving to the line-cutters, "Oh, he's their President. He's sponsoring their cutting in line." Not fair. He's not my President. And then in this story, someone in front of the line, some highly educated person turns around and says, "Oh, you rednecks. you undereducated, stupid, ignorant Southerners or hayseeds, you deserve to be in line where you are." Then they snap. Then they feel -- in way, what progressives don't look at is honor, is dignity -- they feel much of what I came to call an "honor squeeze." As they're waiting there in line, and as they're in a way being moved back as they experience it, they feel that in their search for dignity, it's hard to find.

**Ralph Nader:** Throughout history, social movements are characterized almost overwhelmingly by movements of belief rather than movements of thought that are fact intensive. And that's true all over the world. And what happens is that if the certain strata in the society feels oppressed or repressed, they have a choice. They can direct their anger down on people who are even more repressed, like blacks or women - as you say - immigrants; or they can direct their anger up at the corporate oppressors who turned government against them. Louisiana is a classic example of a corporate state -

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Yes.

**Ralph Nader:** ... The oil petrochemical industry. They dominate it right down to the water you drink, the air you breathe, the food that's contaminated in the bayous. I want to ask you - and you approached your research with empathy - I mean you weren't interested in arguing with them and polemics. I want to refer to one of your statements -

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Also, hold on to the differences. That's the trick.

**Ralph Nader:** Oh yeah, you did contrast that. But you wanted them to really talk with you and say what's on their mind, uninhibited.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Exactly.

**Ralph Nader:** In one of your interviews, you said... the people you interviewed appeared to have been directly hurt by competition from people of color. But, you said their economic problems lies elsewhere - you argued - in, "Unchecked corporate power and technological transformation," meaning automation among other things. Then you said "There is no denying that demographic cultural change had robbed white men of the status they once enjoyed." Did you ever try to in response to their stories, talk about their view of unchecked corporate power and automation replacing their jobs? Because, they see it. They don't have to read it. They see the refineries with one-tenth of the workers. And they see the cancer. In that respect, what about the white women and the white men lives there? Why aren't they emphasized enough? Let's start with their view of unchecked corporate power and automation. That is anger up, not anger down.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Right, right. It's fascinating that in a sense - there's so much to say here - they looked exactly down at people who were rivals, who seemed to be two notches down. In a way, you can say that the classic locus of class conflict: the factory floor - where the boss that's making the work ten hours a day and underpaying you - that that to some extent has gone offshore. And what's replaced it as points of social tension... For the left, it's Occupy Wall Street. It's the corporate masters and the rest of it, the one and the ninety-nine percent. But the people I came to know, they knew about that. They have talks about that (the corporate masters). But their

real anger and sense of resentment was aimed down at the people that they'd define as not working, not playing by the rules: these line cutters. That was their point of focus.

**Ralph Nader:** Is it because it's anthropomorphized? In other words, they *see* these people. They resent these people. Whereas, the corporations are more abstract?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Yeah.

**Ralph Nader:** We're not talking about some abstract tax gimmick that's producing corporate tax escapes. We're talking about - the corporations are in their face every day in that area of Louisiana. I've been there.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Let me give you an example. Sasol, which is the South Africa based, big, huge conglomerate petrochemical plant that's now expanding - it's already there, but now it's expanding. Huge numbers, sixty, seventy, acres now of expansion going on. And they are expanding because they want to take advantage of cheap, natural gas that's now available through fracking. So that's Sasol. It's the queen of all of the petros that are expanding around Lake Charles now. Very few permanent new jobs, very few. All together, while the rhetoric is "jobs, jobs, jobs," no more than 15% of all Louisianans have a job that has *anything* to do with oil or petro. What they do see, however, are these highly automated plants. And the people who were going to run them are PhD chemists from MIT that are brought in, that are highly trained chemists, or Filipino pipe fitters that come in with H-1 visas and are paid less. The Man Camps - so-called - that are going to house the Filipino and other pipe fitters are made often by Mexican labor. People look here, and they say "Gee, what's in it for me as a white, blue collar guy?" Not much. But why accept it? Why not focus on it? I think - and I'm guessing here - but I think it's a sense of hopelessness, a sense that actually you can't move it. It's too big. You've got to adapt to it. And that underlying this right-wing kind of world view based on this deep story: "I'm going to focus on the people that are getting ahead of me and not on what goes on at the top of the hill." The change is in the American dream itself. And that worldview, I think it's a tacit strategy for how to handle the new face of globalization. I think the left has its, and the right has its. The right: "We can't change it. We've got to adapt. If these new multinationals don't want any regulation, well,

that's fine. Come to Louisiana. We'll pretend to regulate you, but we won't. And if these big multinationals want up to \$1.6 billion incentive money, so that these companies don't settle in Texas - that they come to Louisiana instead, fine. We'll give them \$1.6. And we'll fire - which Governor Jindal, two-term rightwing governor did - fire 32,000 public sector workers, teachers, nurses, and so on." They say, "Adapt. There's nothing you can do. Let's circle the wagons. We don't need a public sector. We've got the church. We've got family. Bow down, adapt, attract..." I think that's underneath it. They feel like it's rational.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah. It's just irrational adjustment to their powerlessness. Is that what you're saying?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Absolutely.

**Ralph Nader:** Let me ask you this. What do you think about the presence of the federal government in the Postal Service there, which hires a lot of veterans, blue-collar people? What do they think about the wars abroad that are fought by disproportionately rural people in the United States - it's really quite extraordinary compared to the soldiers that come from the cities? The draining of trillions of dollars that could be used in their area and around the country to rebuild the roads and highways and sewage, drinking water systems, schools, etcetera, and give them a good jobs? When you are interviewing them, did you put any of this on their table? Are they angry at the Postal Service, for example? Are they angry at these wars that the corporations are profiting from the soldiers to come back? They talk. They talk candidly. There was a poll in January, 2005 of soldiers in the field in Iraq, and 72% wanted the US to get out of there and come back home, including the majority of Marines. These soldiers, they go back, they talk the reality, not the Bush/Cheney/Obama propaganda. So what about that? In interviewing I've done - a lot of interviewing - and I tend to, not only hear people out - my mother and father taught us to listen - (chuckles) but I tend to put facts on their table, which lead me to shape twenty-four areas of left/right support, like minimum wage, cracking down on a corporate crime, and breaking up the big New York banks, and full Medicare for all. Do you put those on the table to see if they can get past the Rush Limbaugh/Sean Hannity/Fox News saturation propaganda every day in their lives?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** If you establish, as it sounds like you do when you listen to people, a reliable floor of respect in your conversation, there's a lot of common ground found. I was out fishing with a guy, a guy who'd lost his community to a drilling accident, but then was blaming the government instead of Texas Brine that had drilled this hole that lead to the accident going up.

**Ralph Nader:** Huge sinkhole, right?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Huge sinkhole. Bayou Corne Sinkhole, as its now called. This man felt... the community was everything to him. It was powerfully important. His neighbors were his best friends. He has a great sense of place, and he had not moved far from where he was born. And he loved nature. But, he didn't think the word "environmental" or "environmentalist" was good. But, he became a convert. Now, he is a very ardent environmentalist. Tea Party, pro-Trump. And here are the things that out fishing came out. He said "We have to get money out of politics left and right." I say, "Well, you'll get a lot of agreement on that." So that was one. Another was this man that had no vacation to speak of, and the last place of work he had - so the first five years he had one week off an entire year, sick leave and vacation combined. In the next five years, he had two weeks off, so if he got a cold in that second five years, he only had one week the entire year. He said, "I haven't had a month off since I was in college." Now, he is retired. So that's an entire life. I'm talking to him about Norway, just gently, gently. I say, "You know what, another state about the size of Louisiana is an oil state, too. But they have the world's largest sovereign fund. It's beyond the billions, trillions. Everyone is pretty much upper middle class in Norway. They have a thirty-five hour work week." He said "Well, but how much taxes do they have to pay." I said, "I don't know, but I'm sure it's pretty high." Then, there was a long pause, and he said as he was looking out at the water, "Might even be worth it."

**Ralph Nader:** Sure. When you add free healthcare, free higher education, four to seven weeks pay.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** He doesn't go for the free things, but he went for the time, the vacation. He is a great nature lover. There's a lot of possible since --

**Ralph Nader:** What about the Postal Service?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Oh, they say “I use FedEx.” The military, they love. But the war, they don't love in Iraq. But the idea of a military and this man, himself at first thought “Gee, maybe I could get trained as an engineer.” He joined the military. He didn't stick with it. But that scene is an avenue of mobility and Facebook pages are full of pictures of military, proud man.

**Ralph Nader:** We're running out of time. We've been talking with professor emeritus of sociology, Arlie Russell Hochschild, author of the very in-depth insight into area of rural and industrial America in Lake Charles, Louisiana. She calls the books Strangers In Their Own Land, because that's how *they* feel. They feel abandoned. Just to generalize a bit and bring it up to date, Professor Hochschild, would you say that the Trump victory was very much made possible - he lost the popular vote, by the way, and just won the Electoral College - the Trump victory was a victory driven by white America rooted in three dimensions: race, culture and economics?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Yes. But I think the main point I draw away from this is that the Democratic Party didn't have much to offer people like that. I think they didn't see themselves reflected in the conversation. They didn't see real solutions to the problems they faced being offered. And they felt insulted sometimes, “Oh, you rednecks.” They scanned the liberal comedians' language for put-downs of themselves. I came away feeling that there's a tremendous opportunity, but the liberal left has to de-marginalized itself, get out there, respectfully get to know people, and find common ground.

**Ralph Nader:** That's exactly the introspection the Democratic Party should be having. They did turn their back on these people. Thirty million workers today are making less in inflation-adjusted dollars than workers made in 1968, even though worker productivity is doubled. And that includes a lot of people that you interviewed. And they are unemployed or under-employed. Do you think that the Democratic Party is able to transcend its limitations and stop losing our country to the worst, most ruthless Republican Party in the one hundred and sixty-four years of its existence? You can imagine what Franklin D. Roosevelt would have done to today's Republican Party.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Yeah, yeah. I think we have a little eating of humble pie to do and back up and say, “Wait a minute. Something was not on the table for these people.” We need to really look at what could be offered. When I ask people, who your best governor ever was? It wasn’t Governor Jindal. It was a Socialist governor who wanted a chicken in every pot, every white pot, every black pot. And Huey Long - I asked the same guy, “Could Huey Long be elected in Louisiana today?” They said, “Oh, not today, but he’s been our best governor.” Stuff to learn from that.

**Ralph Nader:** That's interesting. Yes. Just think the Populist Progressive Movement started in East Texas in 1886-‘87, swept throughout much of the country, elected governors, senators, almost a president. The biggest verdict in the litigation of asbestos contamination that’s killed hundreds of thousands of workers and the tobacco litigation was in the South. You have a remarkable contrast here. Do they attribute a lot to their views being reinforced by the domination of daily talk radio and Fox TV? Did they mention that in your interviews of them?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** Oh, they don't mention it. But what they say often comes directly from Fox News, because as part of this research, I was listening to Fox News, too. And I could hear them repeat things that they had heard on yesterday’s news. They spoke very lovingly of Rush Limbaugh and so on. They are clearly oriented - there's a self-affirmation effect, and that happens for both left and right, where you go to a source of news that reaffirms your deep story. (undecipherable) We’ve got our deep story too. And we need to really understand that.

**Ralph Nader:** Professor Hochschild, what is the view toward unions? The Atomic Energy and Chemical Workers Union was once one of the most progressive unions in the country. They were the ones working in these petro-chemical plants and oil industry. Do they think that union leaders have betrayed them?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** They do, they do. And they don't see what they're getting for their dues. A lot of that people who... the pipe fitters were part of the union but very ambivalent. They didn’t feel these were champions of their interest.

**Ralph Nader:** Do they have any sense of mobilizing the way the farmers did in 1886, '87? They signed up 200,000 farmers in eight months in East Texas, dollar a day dues equivalent to \$50. They really had fight in them to go after the railroads and the banks that were gouging them. And they wanted regulation. And they didn't have motor vehicles, telephones, emails. Is there any fight in this people in terms of mobilizing?

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** There's a lot of sight but it's all gone and to support of Donald J. Trump. They feel that he is offering them a form of almost secular rapture, a rise up out of their dilemma. They see it as an answer to the deep story. But if you talk to them about their grievances and other possible answers, they're open. They have an open ear. It's not that they love him. It's that nobody else came by.

**Ralph Nader:** That's right. And there's always a "throw their rascals out" syndrome as well.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** That's right, that's right. I'm going to have to end here. It's been real honor to talk to you. I've been great fan and admirer of you.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, thank you very much. We've been talking with Professor Hochschild, author of the bestselling book, Strangers In Their Own Land, got a terrific review in the *New York Times* recently. To be continued. This is a subject that is not going to be dealt with in just a half hour. Thank you very much for coming on.

**Arlie Russell Hochschild:** You're entirely welcome. My pleasure. Bye-bye.

**Ralph Nader:** Bye-bye.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Professor Arlie Russell Hochschild about her latest work, Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right. We will link to that at the [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com) website. Ralph, I wanted to pick up on something that you said actually, about anthropomorphizing things. Let me see if I understand what you were getting

at. Is it that the anger directed downward is easier, because you can put a face on it? Or the anger directed at the government is easier, because you can put say the President's face on it, and in the last eight years it's been a black face? But the corporation is faceless, so there's helplessness associated with that. We can't do anything about that. Is that kind of the point?

**Ralph Nader:** That's part of it. It's quite clear that when you're walking down the street and operating in your own town, you see people who fit that category, the objects of resentment. Corporations work on anonymity. They focus you on their brand name. And most people don't even know who the CEO of Exxon Mobil is, or General Motors is, or Aetna Insurance company. And they like it. Because they know if they become well known, the way JP Morgan and Andrew Carnegie and others were during the Robber Baron Era as some historians have called it, they get more agitated. They get more mobilized. The other thing obviously is that the dignity issue is a very underplayed by Eastern Democratic Party operatives. They have been stripped to their dignity. They're basically told "If you don't go along with certain cultural norms out of Hollywood and New York City and the giant entertainment industry..." who they see every day, "you're bigoted, you're a racist, you're not cool." I think that's one of the reasons Garrison Keillor's program reverberated, because it was literally, the culture between the East and West Coasts. There's a lot of mix there, but my point is when I get down to these areas and speak to people like that, I lay out the predicates, the factual predicates. It connects with their experience, but the issue is to focus their anger up. This is a society where power is concentrated enormously in terms of income wealth and political and economic power in the hands of very few people. They don't live in Lake Charles, Louisiana, although their agents live there, their dealers, their emissaries, so to speak. So, I think this is a very turnaroundable problem. I don't have any problems of developing a kind of progressive campaign that goes to the roots of Southern progressivism. That's where the whole fundamental progressive, populous movement started for heaven's sake. That's the most fundamental movement against concentrated power in our history and led to a lot of reforms and climax in the election of 1912 when they almost had a viable presidential candidate.

**Steve Skrovan:** In Teddy Roosevelt?

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah

Steven Skrovan: David, do you have anything you want to add?

**David Feldman:** I'm just wondering if the Democratic Party courts identity politics out of fear of taking on the one-percent. They're doing corporate America's bidding by focusing solely on ethnicity and sexual preference.

**Ralph Nader:** I think that's the perception millions of people have, who voted for Trump. You forget about me. You're excluding me. You're degrading me. You just want me when you want to send me to Iraq and Afghanistan and fight your Wall Street, Washington wars.

**David Feldman:** Huey Long was not - a bit of a fascist - but he didn't prey on racism. He preyed on class resentment, but not race or ethnic resentment, did he?

**Ralph Nader:** It depends on what year you're talking about. He came out of Louisiana. You remember that movie on his rise to fame, when he wasn't resonating on the stump in Northern Louisiana? People were sort of just listening to him but not rah-rah. And then suddenly he took his coat off, remember? He said, "Okay, I'm a hick, you're a hick". Then, you see, he bonded with them immediately. He terrified Franklin Roosevelt, who thought he was going to challenge him in the 1936 elections. So, number one: he was a "chicken in every pot" type of populist. Number two: he had racist strains, but that's true for Southern populism generally. But number three and most important is: he had real authoritarian tendencies. If he couldn't get his way, the heck with the rule of law. He cut corners even when he was elected to office, especially. He'd use his state police, he'd intimidate people. And when he became a US senator, that's what tracked him to Washington. That's what the Democrats were going to use against him, if he challenged FDR.

**Steve Skrovan:** How much of Huey Long do you see in Donald Trump?

**David Feldman:** I was just going to ask that.

**Ralph Nader:** Hard to say. He's not from the grassroots. He's very much of skyscraper guy, very much New York. He's not really ideological. He has a heavily bruisable ego. Huey Long had an ego, but he didn't have a heavily bruisable ego. He was ready for the rough and tumble. Huey Long had a far, deeper understanding of politics and economics in his own rough hewn way than Donald Trump. It awaits to be seen how Trump emerges. He's very canny. He's very street smart, very fact deprived. But he knows how to manipulate subordinates and appointees. He knows how to get a nomination through the Congress by selecting people from the Congress, the next Attorney General, Senator Jeff Sessions, the next head of the CIA is Congressman Pompeo. He knows how to manipulate power. Now, whether the presidency gets the better angels from him or whether a major terrorist attack from abroad turns him into a monster is really the big question of the day. Because he could turn into a dictatorial monster and using his short phrases, sway people to give up their liberties and crowd out their necessities, focusing on the war and terror, which of course just increases stateless terrorism and country after country. It's an abject failure under Bush and Obama. And will Trump see through that, when he's appointing very aggressive, warlike people in charge of national security and the suggestions of who he's going to appoint as Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the State. By the way, if listeners want a free autobiography of Huey Long, this is the definitive autobiography. It's over 700 page paperback. I will send one to you free, if you simply write a letter to me at PO Box 19367 Washington, DC 20036. It really paints a picture of about fifteen years of controversial American history from Louisiana to Washington DC, particularly the Roosevelt years. It's a brilliant biography by a professor of LSU, Professor Williams. The best done on Huey Long, You get it free. All you've got to do is write me that letter at PO Box 19367 Washington, DC 20036.

**Steve Skrovan:** Very good, we'll put that on the website too, that address for the free book. Let's now take a short break and check in with corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber.

**Russell Mohkiber:** Form the national, presently in Washington, DC. This is your corporate crime reporter morning minute for Friday, November 18, 2016. I'm Russell Mohkiber. The families of nine, Sandy Hook victims and one of the survivors have asked the Connecticut Supreme Court to hear their appeal after the case was struck down last month by a superior court judge in Bridgeport. The lawsuit alleges that the AR15 assault weapon used in the shooting was negligently entrusted

to the public and that the company has violated the state law by aggressively and unethically marketing the AR15 to the public. “The loss of twenty first graders and six educators would shake any community to its core,” the appeal stated. “Ours had to grapple with the manner in which those lives were lost. Children and teachers were gunned down in classrooms and hallways with a weapon that was designed for our armed forces and engineered to deliver maximum carnage.” For the corporate crime reporter, I’m Russell Mohkiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Before we get to your listener questions, we are going to continue our post mortem of the 2016 election and the way forward for the Democratic Party - if there is one – and welcome back one of our regular guests, Bill Curry, former counselor President Bill Clinton and contributor to *The Daily Beast*. Welcome back, Bill.

**Bill Curry:** Great to be with you.

**Ralph Nader:** All right Bill, our listeners are very eager to hear your answers to the following question. The Trump forces and the Republican Party now control the three branches of government. They control the Executive Branch, the Congress and certainly the Supreme Court though probably hold it five/four with the nomination that Trump’s about to send to Congress when he’s inaugurated. Listeners would like to know - and I would too, and I know David and Steve - what do you say about the Democratic Party now should be doing? And second, outside of the Democratic Party, what should citizens be doing in Congressional districts around the country?

**Bill Curry:** Let me just first say that I think the second question is probably the more important question. But I’ll take them in the order you’ve asked. Again, the Democratic Party: what it has to do is change in a fundamental way. So far, the auguries are not good. The one thing the Democrats can say is that their transition is going better than the Republicans and that the , for instance, the Pelosi to Pelosi transition is almost seamless. The fact that they’d retained this geriatric leadership in place through the passing of three whole generations of Republican Congressional leaders indicates a number of things, but among them the lack of self respect for the Democratic Congress itself, that after so many defeats, it wouldn’t simply give these people

gold watches and ask them to move on. This isn't about purging or punishing. It's really the least they could do now for us is *leave*. Secondly, just going over to the DNC fight, again it's not as interesting to me as some others. The DNC did everything in its power --

**Ralph Nader:** Democratic National Committee.

**Bill Curry:** Yes. The Democratic National Committee. There's a big fight now. Bernie's got into it on behalf of Keith Ellison, trying to get the right person to be the head of the DNC. It's not an important thing, I will say that. But if you look back at the election. Well, the DNC did try to rig it with Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Donna Brazile and others for Hillary. That's not why she won. The 70% of labor union members who belong to unions that endorsed Clinton without consulting their membership, 70% of labor went for Clinton. It gave her victories in Massachusetts, Iowa, Nevada, Illinois that would otherwise have been impossible for her. She would have lost the election. It's not just the Democratic Party. And it's certainly not just the leader of the Democratic Party any more than it simply the leadership of the house. The Democratic National Committee is simply a corrupt shell. Its leaders aren't - the people who live in the state don't even know who's on it. They're not really elected by anyone. When it became clear that early in the process that Debbie Wasserman Schultz was out to do everything she could to tilt it, only two DNC members spoke up at all out the entire organization. And Tulsi Gabbard was the one person with the integrity to resign. You need to create an actual - you decide whether you want a political party. If you do you, you get rid of the whole structure. You create open, elected seats for the DNC; and you create something more like the Democratic Farm Labor Party in its glory days in Minnesota, which was an open process from the bottom up. You take the lessons of this election - two. One: that money doesn't count in the way that they thought it did - certainly not in a presidential election - that if you're true to your convictions, you can raise enough money through small dollar donations without prostituting your core values. And secondly, it says that all the techniques of these elections - the micro-targeting and the messaging and the polling and the focus-grouping - it's not how progressive change happens. By adopting these modern marketing techniques, we necessarily defeat our purpose. When you break the whole country into tiny niche markets to get just the right message, you've given up on the possibility of selling a vision of systemic change, which is the only way systemic change ever happens.

**Ralph Nader:** Which bring us to we, the citizens. What should we, the citizens, do in Congressional districts, because Congress is the biggest tool for citizens to charge back?

**Bill Curry:** Well, I would just say two things here, the first of which is that - and I was the part of the problem on this many years ago. And I helped to convince a lot of the left to form PACs in Connecticut I did. And I was head of the political action committee for the Nuclear Freeze Movement and then all of us jumped into electoral politics around 1980 and thought that we were doing the right thing. And in some ways we were. But I will just say, first of all, that we invested in it in the wrong ways. And one is the while doing that, we allowed the Democratic Party to colonize the progressive movement in this country. We became apologists for wayward Democrats. Winning the very next round became the only thing. America, the progressive movement, and the Democratic Party were all better off when we had a much more arms-length relationship. When we held them accountable, when we had a bottom line, when there was something they could do that would make us walk away. And they knew it. I don't embrace and haven't embraced the Green model. I'm much happier with the Working Families Party model, where you endorse some, primary some, run some Independents, but only when you're certain it serves the larger goal, when you give yourself tactical flexibility. And then the second thing is to realize that a lot of this happens outside of electoral politics. And I think ...

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah. Just quickly focus on that.

**Bill Curry:** What I mean by that is that one just to stop and realize the breadth of citizenship, what it means to participate, what it means to organize behind ideas, behind changes in one's community, what it means to be helping to organize cooperatives and peer-to-peer production and alternatives to the entire integrated political economy, which is becoming so much more oppressive and so much more on unequal, even as I speak. So, there are other models to - suffice it to say in the little time we have left here - there are far other models for across-the-board civic engagement. And my great worry is that too many people will walk away from the civic life of the nation when this is in fact just the moment when we've gotta come back.

**Ralph Nader:** Well said. Don't withdraw. Don't just be cynical observers. Roar back. That's the great populous progressive American tradition. And there's a huge left/right consensus on many of these economic issues. Thank you very much, Bill Curry.

**Bill Curry:** My pleasure, as always Ralph. Talk to you guys, thanks.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with Bill Curry. Check out Bill's writing at *The Daily Beast*. Now, let's get to some of the listener's questions. We had a lot of response to last week's episode about the Electoral College. Many from people on Facebook who didn't actually listen the episode but thought they knew what was going on and really didn't. We've talked with Stephen Silberstein of the organization, National Popular Vote. David, why don't you throw out the first question?

**David Feldman:** Robert Obeid writes, "Ralph for years I've I asked my Republican North Carolina State legislators to consider the National Popular Vote law. Thus far, they've shown no interest in doing so. Perhaps, Republican citizens have as much interest in tossing the Electoral College out as do Democrats and Independents, but the same obviously does not apply to those in government."

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you have a good point there. The National Popular Vote law that he refers to, listeners, is the interstate compact that's already been adhered to by California, Illinois, New York, Maryland and other states that says, "When enough states reach - through this compact agreements - a total of 270 electoral votes, then these states will throw their electoral votes to whoever wins the presidential popular vote nationwide." There is a lot of left/right support for that, but when you get Republican officeholders, they looked back and they say, "Why do we want to get rid the Electoral College? We've won two presidential contests in sixteen years, one in 2000 where Gore won the popular vote and lost the Electoral College to shenanigans and Florida and a Supreme Court decision; and just recently a few days ago, Hillary is ahead in the popular vote nationwide by at least 1.5 million votes, but she loses the presidency to Trump because he got the

Electoral College vote.” So, that’s why Republican officeholders are saying, “Hey, you know we’re two for two in the last sixteen years. What’s not to like?” But I think there will be enough legislators and governors to bring this over the top. The National Popular Vote law has already 165 electoral votes. They’re more than halfway there to 270. People who are pressing that, our guest of last week Steve Silberstein, thinks there is very good likelihood they’ll get it within two or three years, in time for the 2020 presidential campaign.

**David Feldman:** Ralph the question was also brought up that the ten or eleven states have signed on are all Democratic leaning states. Are there enough Democratic states to put it over 270?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, that’s where the 2018 elections come in to see whether the Democrats were covering more state legislators. But, they’re having luck in places like Oklahoma. They’ve got it through one house in Oklahoma, which is heavily Republican. You don’t have to spin off too many more to get to the 270. And we’ll see. And if there is backlash in the 2018 elections of Democrats getting more state legislators and governorships, that ought to be enough.

**Steve Skrovan:** Another listener Joe Canon writes, “Another alternative would be to modify the winner-take-all form of the Electoral College for each state and have the electoral votes be proportional to the popular vote in each state like what they do with the primaries.” Is that another formula? Is that valid?

**Ralph Nader:** That’s a little more complex. Now, there are two states. It’s Maine and Nebraska. They break it down by Congressional district. If you break it down by the internal state popular vote, then you’re going to have to deal with the provisional voting. You’re going to have to deal with shenanigan voting. You’re going to have to deal with voting machine, software manipulation; and it gets very, very difficult to decide who’s going to win the day after election. I think that’s the rap on that proposal.

**David Feldman:** Connie Riffenberg writes: “Great show, as usual. One question that didn’t come up was why continue the Electoral College if we simply count the number of votes nationwide and the one with the most wins? What does the Electoral College have to do then?”

It's just repeating what the people voted for. Also, if it's a close margin - whatever that might be - doesn't trigger a run of vote or what?"

**Ralph Nader:** No. And even if it's close with a fifty thousand-vote advantage nationwide, that candidate wins. What happens with the interstate compact is it neutralizes the Electoral College. In other words, it bypasses it without repealing it. The reason why the reform is not directly on the Electoral College is you have to amend the Constitution. We all know how difficult that is to get through the Congress in three quarters of the states. So, the Electoral College remains on the books, but it has no effect, because it's been overridden by another provision in the Constitution, which says the states have the exclusive power to determine election rules.

**David Feldman:** I think what she was asking is: what happens if we had a third party and nobody got the 270 threshold? What happens then?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, if nobody gets the 270 threshold, it could go to the House of Representatives.

**David Feldman:** I think that has happened early in the Republic.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes.

**Steve Skrovan:** And I think the other thing behind that is, what is the efficacy of the Electoral College? I mean is there some efficacy to having the states handling the voting? Is that what - as opposed to a large federal vote being counted? Is that one of the reasons the Electoral College is good?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, originally it was to protect the small states from the big states. But, I think where it does now leaves tens of millions of voters in blue state, red state, slam-dunk Democrat-Republican not seeing any presidential candidates. So, the Republican candidate is not going to campaign in Massachusetts or California. And the Democratic candidate is not going to campaign in Texas and Alabama. It really has boomeranged in leaving the off limits the bulk of the country so most of the campaign is in the so-called swing states, which usually is Florida, Ohio and three

or four other states. That's where huge TV money goes. And as Mister Silberstein pointed out last week, federal funds tend to favor those swing states in anticipation of the forthcoming election.

**David Feldman:** To bring it back to Professor Hochschild's book, if I lived in Flint, Michigan, even if I were liberal, I would favor the Electoral College, because they didn't pay attention to me in Flint Michigan. There's a huge part of me that still believes in the Electoral College. If you're not smart enough to win that ground game, and you're not going to pay attention to the people who are really suffering, maybe you don't deserve to win the presidency.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, there are all kinds of permutations, David. You just pointed out one. That may work in Michigan, but then they may lose the whole thing, because of exactly the Electoral College that they preferred in Michigan cost them in another states. I think the nationalpopularvote.com - that's the website, listeners - you want to find out what's going on with these interstate compacts like California is already onboard and Illinois and New York. And they also suggest what you can do in your state to get your state legislature to sign on to this interstate compact. That when you see that operating is simple: "We, the signatory states of the compact, based on our state law and other state laws as part of the compact will throw our Electoral College votes to whoever wins the popular vote nationwide." It's the simplest one, the one that avoids some of the morass of vote recounts and day-after-day not determining who won the election after Tuesday.

**Steve Skrovan:** Okay. I think we have time for one more question. And this is on a totally different topic - although Ralph you kind of referred to the Post Office earlier in the show. This comes from Marie Ida Johnson from our station in San Diego. And she was talking about - I don't know what show she is referring to exactly - but "You let your guest get away the term 'snail mail,' a ubiquitous phrase. I used to think it was funny. No more. Many years ago the USPS made a wonderful improvement to once again move mail quicker. As far as my mail goes it is all still great. We're talking about union members, working class, doing a good job even as Congress makes incredible demands re. pensions, weakening their effectiveness, consolidating to privatize the service. I hope you will speak up to eliminate that phrase from our lexicon." Snail mail.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, more than that we have championed the Postal Service. We put out two major reports. We pushed the postal unions to be even more aggressive in preserving postal services and restoring what has already been lost. Millions of people have to go - rain, snow, sun - they got to go down from their front door down to the street where the postal boxes are. You can't count the number of people who are slipping or otherwise inconveniencing themselves. What for? For decades, the postman, as he was called, delivered right to the door. And we're trying to preserve Saturday delivery, because you take out Saturday and you have Sunday no delivery, I mean how many people will put something to postal box on Thursday, first-class mail? And we have to curb some of the erosions of private mail delivery system, FedEx and United Parcel. Do you know that the Post Office is prohibited by federal law from delivering beer and wine, for instance? So, we're very, very conscious of it. We are the leading champions of the US Postal Service.

**David Feldman:** We should call it "escargot mail," 'cause it sounds more delicious.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, on *that* note, that's our show.

**David Feldman:** That will turn off...

**Steve Skrovan:** It's French, great.

**David Feldman:** ... the fly-over the states.

**Steve Skrovan:** Right. Well, thank you for your questions. Keep them coming either on Ralph's Facebook page or on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. I want thank our guests for coming. Bill Curry, of *The Daily Beast* and Professor Arlie Russell Hochschild, author of [Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger, Mourning on the American Right](#). We will link to all of the relevant material at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com).

**David Feldman:** A transcript of this episode will be posted on at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com).

**Steve Skrovan:** For Ralph's weekly blog, go to [nader.org](http://nader.org), for more from Russell Mohkiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com).

**David Feldman:** Remember to visit the country's only law museum, the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut, go to [tortmuseum.org](http://tortmuseum.org). And speaking of mail, you can get a biography of Huey Long. How would we do that?

**Ralph Nader:** Just send me a letter. To me, PO Box 19367, Washington, DC 20036, and say you want a copy of the biography of Huey Long. And it is seven hundred